Yale Policy Institute

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the second annual Yale Policy Institute Academic Fellowship. We are thrilled to see you take this vital step toward exploring impactful knowledge, leadership development, and policy innovation here at Yale. Through your application, we look forward to learning more about your unique perspectives, passions, and aspirations.

It is with great enthusiasm that we express our gratitude for your decision to engage with policy at such a formative stage. Whether your interests lie in equal justice reform, public health, foreign affairs, climate and environmental policy, or even the intersections of artificial intelligence and society, the Yale Policy Institute is committed to providing you with the tools, resources, and mentorship to grow as a leader in these spaces.

The Yale Policy Institute is Yale's premier student-run think tank, dedicated to transforming research into tangible, results-oriented impact. Our projects and initiatives span local, state, federal, and international levels, providing fellows with the opportunity to hone their critical thinking skills, collaborate with peers, and contribute to policy solutions that matter.

We encourage you to read through this document carefully. It will equip you with the knowledge, expectations, and guidance necessary to create a strong fellowship application. Once again, we are deeply grateful for your interest in the Yale Policy Institute Academic Fellowship. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact ypifellowships@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing the creativity, passion, and dedication you will bring to this year's fellowship.

Best,
The Yale Policy Institute Leadership Team

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As you will see in the following pages, the YPI Academic Fellowship is a comprehensive and rigorous nine-week program designed for students with a strong passion for policymaking, research, and an interest in the United States' political landscape and global current affairs.

Throughout the fellowship, you will work closely with Yale University students who share your enthusiasm for policy and public service. Each week will follow the structure outlined, ensuring that fellows are fully informed, well-prepared, and engaged with the materials and tasks at hand.

Successful YPI Fellows will be required to complete a set of assigned readings before each weekly lecture. At YPI, we emphasize reading not only as preparation but also as a tool for making meaningful contributions to your small-group discussions, which take place after each lecture. Following these discussions, groups will be tasked with drafting a policy proposal based on the week's theme and submitting it by the deadline specified.

In addition to academic growth, the fellowship offers you the opportunity to strengthen your communication, organizational, networking, and leadership skills — qualities that are at the heart of every YPI member's experience. You will learn how to think critically, collaborate effectively, and navigate complex issues, all while engaging in conversations that mirror real-world policymaking.

We ask that you approach the fellowship with an open mind and a willingness to challenge yourself. Some topics may be more challenging than others, but the experience is designed to stimulate your intellectual growth. Alongside your peers and mentors, you will have the chance to tackle pressing questions of justice, governance, and innovation.

Finally, we are proud to share that the fellowship will feature distinguished guest speakers and lecturers, who will bring invaluable insights from their work in public service, academia, and the policy sector. These names will be announced at a later date.

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Eligibility

To apply for the Yale Policy Institute Academic Fellowship, students must meet the following minimum criteria:

- Be a current High School student in grades 9th to 12th.
- Demonstrate a strong academic record (a minimum GPA of 3.3 is recommended).
- Show evidence of intellectual curiosity and a genuine interest in policy, research, current affairs, or related fields (government, economics, history, social sciences, STEM-policy intersections, etc.)
- Possess strong written and verbal communication skills, as demonstrated through essays, coursework, and extracurricular activities.
- Be prepared to commit to the full nine-week program, including required weekly assignments, lectures, small group discussions, and policy proposal submissions.
- Have reliable internet access and the ability to attend scheduled sessions virtually.

Application Deadline: October 30th, 2026, 11:59 pm EST: SUBMISSION
High School Fellowship Start Date: November 30th, 2026, 8:00 pm EST
High School Fellowship End Date: April 5th, 2027
Holiday Recess Between: December 8th, 2026 - January 18th, 2027

Program Costs
The application fee for this program is $25.
The tuition for this program is $375.
We will be providing need-based cost waivers and financial assistance. We encourage those who believe they qualify for financial aid to reach out to ypifellowships@gmail.com and fill out the financial aid section of the Google Form.

Application Expectations

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Each candidate will be holistically assessed. While we value academic excellence, our admissions process does not rely on a single measure. We seek well-rounded students who possess a blend of intellectual ability, motivation, leadership, and creativity.

We encourage applicants who:

- Are leaders or active participants in their school and local communities.
- Can demonstrate a capacity to collaborate effectively and contribute to group work.
- Show a willingness to engage with challenging and unfamiliar topics with an open and critical mind.
- Aspire to create tangible impact through policy ideas, whether at the local, state, national, or international level.

Essay Prompts and Responses

Tell us about a time when you worked with others to solve a complex problem or address a disagreement. What role did you play, and what did you learn from the experience? (200–300 words)

The Yale Policy Institute values diverse voices and experiences. How would your background, perspective, or lived experience contribute to the Fellowship community? (200–300 words)

What area of policy excites you the most, and why? How did you become interested in this area, and what impact would you like to make within it? (200–300 words)

Describe a problem within your community that could be addressed through policy. Why does this issue matter to you, and what steps might you take to begin addressing it? (200–300 words)

What does "leadership" mean to you? Why do you think some leaders are labeled as "good," "bad," "radical," or "centrist"? In your opinion, what qualities make an effective leader in today's world? (200–300 words)

Choose a pressing policy challenge (local, national, or global). What solution would you propose, and how could young people play a meaningful role in addressing it? (500 words)